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Transportation Topics
FOR CONSUMERS
from the Office of Consumer Affairs

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"PUBLIC TRANSIT IS SO DIFFICULT" CONSUMERS COMPLAIN

General B. O. Davis (left), Assistant Secretary for Safety and Consumer Affairs, Discusses Aviation Security.

Tough Policy on Air Piracy Declared

The Federal Government is concerned and has declared an all out war on air piracy. However, despite increases over the past two to three years, statistics indicate that only a minute percentage of aircraft are ever involved in hijacking attempts.

There were only 27 hijackings in 1971 out of more than six and one-half million regularly scheduled U.S. airline flights carrying approximately 170 million passengers. An airline consumer may have an uneasy feeling when flying these days, especially right after a highly publicized extortion-bomb plot or air piracy incident, but the fact that so few hijackings occur out of millions of regular flights is reassuring.

According to General Benjamin O. Davis, Assistant Secretary for Safety and Consumer Affairs and Director of the Federal Government's anti-hijacking program, hijackings can be prevented by screening techniques now available. Variations of screening are in use in all of the 531 airports in the United States which serve scheduled air carriers. You can help by having a positive, cooperative attitude toward security procedures, even when they cause some personnel inconvenience.

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Consumer Hearings Held in Eight States

A consumer from Pennsylvania said it best:

"One reason people don't use public transportation is that it's so - - - - difficult!"

In one public hearing after another, consumers have been spelling out frequently and vehemently what they see the problems of public or mass transit to be: Infrequent and inadequate scheduling, high fares, poor interfacing with other modes, the poor condition and design of equipment, and lack of information about schedules and routes.

Bus service receives the brunt of the criticism.

Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe, with a mandate from President Nixon, is attempting to guide national policy so that the various transportation modes serve the needs of all Americans—the needs for mobility and the present and future demands for a better environment in which to live and move.

Twenty-one transportation consumer hearings, which Secretary Volpe directed, have been held in eight states by Ann Uccello, Director of the Department of Transportation Office of Consumer Affairs. Arrangements are now being made for hearings in 7 additional states this year. The "Interim Report on Consumer Public Hear-

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"We've only scratched the surface of our transportation needs here," one consumer stated at a hearing in Pennsylvania. "Try some daring innovations, initiate model systems, promote better public education and better intergovernmental cooperation."

Traveler Problems Identified In Study Just Completed

A study of passenger travel problems indicates that serious inconvenience exists—particularly for the aged, handicapped, inexperienced, and for travelers who cannot speak English—and must be promptly alleviated.

The research study, entitled *Evaluation of Traveler Service Problems*, was made to identify and analyze major problem areas encountered by the domestic traveler using air, bus and rail intercity common carriers, and to determine what should be done to eliminate the causes of the problems. It followed a pilot study on the same subject, completed in 1970.

The U.S. transportation system is the most advanced in the world. Most of the 380 million annual domestic intercity trips are completed without undue inconvenience, but the difficulties are particularly acute for passengers who are unable to correct them.

The intercity travel system appears to be designed to ease the operation and minimize the costs to the private company providing the service under the assumption that the traveler will somehow be able to adapt as he always has, the report states.

In addition to an almost complete lack of coordination between air, rail and bus modes, the study found that problems are caused by a marked lack of consistency in standards and procedures within each mode.

Among examples of problems cited in the study are:

- Information systems do not provide complete trip data and directions to the traveler.
- Signs and symbols are not uniform.
- Industry abbreviations and terminology on travel documents cause confusion.
- Public address announcements are too often unintelligible.
- Central city terminals are not properly cleaned for traveler comfort.
- No standards exist for the treatment of passengers during travel interruption.
- Local transportation to and from terminals is often inconvenient or expensive.
- Long walks, steps and ramps inconvenience many travelers.
- Assistance with luggage is inadequate, particularly on the rail and bus modes.
- Baggage handling systems frequently cause excessive loss and damage.
- Insufficient security precautions lead to inadequate personal protection and to loss of personal property.

The study recommends:

1. Each transportation carrier should analyze its intercity travel system and put into operation procedures which take into consideration the needs of all travelers including those with special problems and those who are inexperienced.
2. The regulatory agencies should exercise their authority to set standards for travel service and for quality and maintenance of facilities and equipment.
3. The Department of Transportation should assume leadership in coordinating the activities of government, industry and private groups in establishing consistent facilities and service for intercity travel by common carrier.

The study was conducted by RMC Incorporated of Bethesda, Maryland, for the Office of Facilitation and the Office of Consumer Affairs of the Department of Transportation.

Copies of *Evaluation of Traveler Service Problems* (DOT–OS–10212–A) may be obtained from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Virginia 22151, for $3.00 per copy.

Minibus Features Facilities for Handicapped

Minibus vehicles like this one are being used now by the State of Maryland's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Department of Transportation is planning for their use in Urban Mass Transportation Administration service development demonstration projects. This minibus features a unique electric hydraulic lift gate for loading and unloading the handicapped.

Department of Transportation Responds to Consumer

The Department of Transportation is listening to the consumer and continually evaluating what he is saying, not only through hearings and conferences but by conducting special studies and analyzing correspondence.

Representatives from the various secretarial offices and operating administrations within the Department are now meeting regularly as the Consumer Affairs Coordinating Committee to consider consumer concerns and plans for alleviating consumer problems. A few of the programs and demonstration projects that have been funded by the Department to help people become more mobile are described here.

Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) Project in Morgantown, West Virginia

This project, funded by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, is designed with the elderly and handicapped in mind and is scheduled to be operational late

Those who use wheelchairs will find it easy to ride the Morgantown, West Virginia personal rapid transit system. The floor of the vehicle and the loading dock will be the same height making it easy for people in wheelchairs to board the cars.

in 1972. It is an advanced system that is totally automated with vehicles seating eight people. All vehicles will have extra-wide doors and wide aisles which will accommodate wheelchairs. For the demonstration, three stations will be operational; when the demonstration is complete and the system is owned by the city of Morgantown, it will have six stations, equipped with escalators or elevators and ramps which will increase accessibility to the system for the elderly and handicapped.

Dial-A-Ride Project in Haddonfield, New Jersey

In this demonstration project, begun in February 1972, the individual telephones and a bus is sent to the door. One vehicle in a fleet of 12 is specially equipped with a ramp to accommodate wheelchair loading onto the vehicle. Primarily, the demonstration vehicles take commuters to and from the new high-speed Lindenwold rapid transit line, which is operated between southern New Jersey and Philadelphia; but they are also utilized for local transit during off-peak hours.

Secretary of Transportation, John A. Volpe tries the new Dial-a-ride door to door public transit that began operating in February in Haddonfield, New Jersey.

Passageway to Connect Facilities in Chicago

A new passageway connecting a major commuter rail terminal and a distributor rapid transit line has been funded in Chicago. The demonstration project will assist the elderly by providing a convenient, weather-protected connection, complete with escalators, between the two rail modes of transportation.

Transportation to Health Facilities in Connecticut

In the lower Naugatuck Valley in Connecticut, a demonstration project was funded for the development of transportation services to health and medical facilities. Demonstrations will test demand-responsive and fixed-route services as well as combinations of the two. Specially equipped vehicles with a hydraulic lift to accommodate wheelchairs and a fold-down step to ease entry will be tested and demonstrated. About 10 percent of the population is elderly in this suburban community.

Taxicabs for the Aging in Montana

Helena, Montana, capital of that state and its retirement center, had no bus system. Taxi service, at high cost, was the only transportation available for the aged. A demonstration grant was provided for a multi-modal system which will be demand-responsive and designed to fulfill the mobility needs of senior citizens. The operator of the system will be the local taxi company, and if the demonstration project proves successful the city will continue operation when federal funds are depleted.

Improving Mobility for the Elderly in St. Petersburg

The Department has provided funds for planning a project which will lead to improved mobility for the elderly people of St. Petersburg where 80 percent of the population in the area is elderly.

Planning Grant for Linking Facilities in Rhode Island

In Cranston, Rhode Island, a planning grant has been awarded to determine the best system for linking five senior citizen public housing units and an education/training center for mentally retarded children and adults to community social service agencies, medical facilities, employment and recreational activities.

School Buses for Transportation in Oregon

A grant has been awarded to Klamath Falls, Oregon, to test a feasibility program for the use of school buses during idle hours for public transportation. The demonstration will primarily serve senior citizen housing complexes.

Study on Vandalism and Passenger Security

A study is now underway to determine the scope, severity, dollar cost and characteristics of vandalism and

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The Elderly Ask for Federal Assistance to Increase Mobility

The delegates to the 1971 White House Conference on Aging last December submitted 25 transportation-related recommendations to Conference Chairman Arthur Flemming to be included in his report to President Nixon. In the few months since the Conference, Federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation, have been busy planning action programs to help the elderly. Some of them are described in this issue of "Transportation Topics."

State conferences held prior to the White House Conference had already brought to the surface the surprise that transportation rated third as a priority need, superseded only by income and health needs. The recommendations (not necessarily endorsed by the Department) are presented below in abbreviated form:

Transportation Recommendations to the President:

1. Adopt a policy of increased transportation services for the urban and rural elderly in the form of financial support for operating and capital subsidies to transit authorities in addition to reduced or no fares.
2. Increase support for development of transportation for all users, especially the elderly, handicapped, rural people, the poor and youth.
3. Design provisions for transportation to and from publicly-funded programs for the elderly (such as health service programs).
4. Require that existing transportation programs and all new transportation programs be coordinated with public-funded programs for the elderly.
5. Arrange for government-owned passenger vehicles to be used to transport the elderly when they are not used for the purpose for which they were purchased (school buses, etc.).
6. Establish an area clearinghouse so that all local transportation resources are used efficiently.
7. Provide leadership and financial support for individualized, flexible transportation so that the elderly may have increased access to health care facilities, shopping, religious, social, recreational and cultural activities.
8. Set minimum standards for the design of equipment and facilities to assure safety, comfort and convenience of the elderly as pedestrians, drivers and users of transportation.
9. Design transportation systems and services free of barriers which the elderly can use with ease.
10. Provide guidelines to state and local governments to assist in the development of terminals, shelters, centralized transit information, traffic control and crosswalk markings.
11. Urge legislation at all levels of government to allow the elderly to travel at half fare or less on a space-available basis on all public transportation.

This proposed personal rapid transit system is designed with the ramps and entrances easily accessible by the elderly and handicapped. The cars can be summoned by pressing a button.

12. Adopt a policy which will increase funding for transportation and coordinate all forms of transportation, public and private.
13. Urge Congress to adopt legislation to convert the Highway Trust Fund into a General Transportation Fund for all modes of transportation.
14. Use a portion of the General Transportation Fund for the development of new services and improvement of existing transportation services for the elderly.
15. Establish a nationwide set of driver licensing standards that do not discriminate against the elderly on the basis of age alone.
16. Establish a national policy for guaranteed insurance to cover volunteer drivers.
17. Arrange to somehow compensate volunteers who drive the elderly for out-of-pocket expenses.
18. Arrange for an elderly person to be appointed as an assistant to the Secretary of Transportation to represent the needs of the elderly.
19. Pass legislation to prohibit insurance companies from increasing auto insurance premiums or cancelling policies on the basis of age alone.
20. Encourage continued exploration by the states of the concept of no-fault insurance and also government-operated insurance programs in order to develop better insurance programs.
21. Correct the present lack of provisions for the basic transportation needs of the rural elderly by amending Federal laws.
22. Empower the Federal Government to act unilaterally in the interest of the elderly, handicapped, poor and youth in the absence of state and local response to their transportation needs.
23. Incorporate individualized and/or public transportation in the planning of all privately funded senior housing projects.
24. Ensure that policies adopted as the result of the White House Conference on Aging apply to all of the U.S., its territories and Puerto Rico.
25. Provide, through subsidies, for the transportation needs of the American Reservation Indians.

Tough Policy on Air Piracy (page 1)

Transportation Secretary Volpe named General Davis to head the Federal government's anti-hijacking program after President Nixon became concerned and ordered an inter-agency Federal effort to deter such criminal acts.

The success rate for hijackers has dropped sharply over the past three and one-half years from 82 percent in 1969 to less than 30 percent for 1972. There were 29 incidents of hijacking in the United States through mid-August with 39 hijackers, extortionists or saboteurs involved. Of these, 19 were captured, 3 killed and 17 are still fugitives.

The United States is seeking the cooperation of all other countries in order to prevent hijackers from finding refuge. "The world community of nations must join together in following a tough policy toward all acts of air piracy which, if given in to, will only inspire other would-be criminals," General Davis says.

DOT Responds to the Consumer (page 3)

passenger security on mass transit vehicles. This study will be followed by a number of demonstration projects designed to illustrate and measure the most effective means of vandalism control and of ensuring passenger security. Fear of being molested and/or robbed is a constant one with the elderly, and it is hoped that through this study and subsequent demonstrations this problem associated with utilization of mass transit can be minimized.

Free Bus Service to be Tried in Amherst

The idea of free bus transportation will be tried in the Amherst, Massachusetts area. A grant of $475,441 was made to the University of Massachusetts by the Department of Transportation Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the remaining cost of $187,728 will be paid by the University and students. This demonstration project will serve several purposes. First, it will help determine the impact of free bus transportation coupled with restricted auto parking and auto-free zones in a rapidly-growing community. Second, it will help measure in a full-scale field experiment what effect free transportation will have on an auto-dependent community; and third, planners will be able to assess the potential of using this concept in other urban areas to encourage greater use of public transportation.

Proposed Legislation Sent to Congress Aimed at Transportation Balance

The Secretary has sent proposed legislation to Congress that, if passed, would allow highway trust money to be used for mass transit in both urban and rural communities in addition to its continued use for highways. This Federal-Aid Highway and Mass Transportation Act is a direct answer to the many citizens who are asking for increased public transportation and for relief from urban congestion. It is a billion dollar response to urban commuters who spend long hours in subways, on buses, or stuck in monumental traffic jams. It will also help the rural people who have no means of travel without a car.

Many of the innovative systems for transporting people and goods, including some described here, were exhibited and demonstrated recently at Transpo '72 held at Dulles Airport near Washington, D.C., May 27 through June 4. All of these PRT systems will remain at the Transpo '72 site 18 months for continuing demonstrations. But demonstrating transportation systems isn't enough. They must be planned, purchased, installed, maintained and managed efficiently to improve the transportation problems expressed by people. Consumers are speaking out and asking for increased mobility. But they must also be willing to put on their citizen hats and help plan local, regional and national transportation systems that serve the needs of all citizens so that optimum mobility will be a reality for all.

Public Transit is so Difficult (page 1)

ings" documents the thoughtful comments, criticisms and suggestions of citizens from these hearings. Running through the comments are three needs which stand out:

1. The need for a balanced transportation system.
2. The need for community and citizen participation in transportation planning.
3. The need for improved automobile safety.

When consumers were asked what changes they would recommend for safer driving, 44 percent said that legal restraints, such as those affecting the drunken driver, would contribute most. Wide use of safety devices, 31 percent said, would improve automobile safety.

A related concern voiced by consumers is the issue of automobile repair. A large number complained about high costs, dishonest practices, poor workmanship and incompetent mechanics.

The consumer hearings held thus far support the overall conclusions that transportation is vital to every individual and that transportation problems are of widespread concern. The desire for good transportation is universal but may be subject to varied interpretations, depending upon the needs of the individual; however, all consumers want transportation to be accessible, safe, clean, moderately quiet, non-polluting, convenient, punctual, flexible and reasonably priced.

"The process of going to the people to find out what is really bothering them about transportation in America is absolutely essential if the policies and programs stimulated by the Department of Transportation are to be responsive to public needs," said Ann Uccello. The findings from the consumer hearings are now being conveyed to each modal administration within DOT and will also be presented to national and local transportation agencies for their consideration and action.

A summary of the findings by mode of transportation from 10 hearings is presented on page 6.

Summary of Transportation Consumer Concerns Expressed at Hearings in Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Texas and Louisiana

BUS SERVICE

Consumers feel actions to improve quality of public transportation must focus on:

1. More frequent service.
2. Greater transit coverage, especially in rural and suburban areas.
3. Better scheduling, with special attention to the needs of low income workers and the elderly.
4. More published information about schedules.
5. Lower fares.
6. Better planning of modal interfaces, including outlying bus stops.
7. More comfortable, cleaner equipment.
8. Positive consumer attitudes toward transit.

AUTOMOBILES

Driver Safety

Consumers feel efforts to improve driver safety should focus on:

1. Safety devices and design improvements to vehicles to be paid for by the manufacturers.
2. Regular and thorough vehicle inspection.
3. More comprehensive driver education, retraining, and periodic testing.
4. Strong penalties and rehabilitative programs for the drunken driver.
5. Uniform motor vehicle laws, driving standards.

Auto Repair Service

Consumers feel efforts to improve auto repair service should focus on:

1. Lowering, standardizing and monitoring repair prices.
2. Eliminating suspected dishonest practices.
3. Reducing the time required for vehicle repairs.
4. Improving the quality of new vehicles.
5. Clarifying and extending warranty coverage.
6. Improving repair quality by licensing mechanics.

Automobile Insurance

Consumers feel efforts to alleviate automobile insurance problems should include:

1. Investigation of the concepts of no-fault insurance.
2. Lower rates.
3. Linking of insurance rates with individual driving records, rather than the "average" of a designated age group.

Auto Purchase

Consumers prefer:

1. Trade-wide, firm list pricing of new cars.
2. More information about performance and operating characteristics, safety features, maintenance, cost, warranty coverage, and availability of service and parts.

Auto Rental

Consumers feel attempts to alleviate their dissatisfaction with auto rental should focus on:

1. Lowering the associated costs.
2. Making rental autos available to a larger segment of the public.
3. Better maintenance and inspection of rental vehicles.
4. More rental centers and pick-up and drop-off service for customers.
5. Better training of car rental personnel.

HIGHWAYS

Rush Hour Traffic Congestion

Consumers feel efforts to relieve traffic congestion should begin by de-emphasizing highways and providing more resources for urban mass transit. More specific suggestions include:

1. Financial and other disincentives to automobile use during rush hours.
2. Better traffic control and use of existing facilities.
3. Car pools, where they do not interfere with work hours and overtime opportunities.
4. Better facilities for pedestrians and bicycles.
5. Ultimately, staggered work hours and changes in land use patterns.

Highway Signs

Consumers are most concerned about the following highway sign issues:

1. Better placement of signs so that motorists will have time to react.
2. More directional information.
3. Clarity and better graphic design.
4. Separation of directional and advertising signs, and billboard control.
5. Warning of upcoming driving hazards.

Motorist Services

Consumer concerns about motorist services focus on:

1. Help in emergency situations.
2. Lack of information about the availability of emergency aid.

3. Traffic delays created by disabled vehicles.
4. Scarcity of services in low density areas.
5. High cost and poor quality of services.
6. Traffic safety.
7. Snow and ice removal.

Highway Planning

Consumers would like the following changes in highway planning:

1. More direct communication between professional planners and consumers.
2. Greater opportunity for citizen groups to challenge the construction of highways not now subject to the requirements of the Environmental Policies Act.
3. More emphasis on highway maintenance and less on new construction.
4. Consideration of the pedestrian and the bicyclist.

AIRLINES

Terminal Access

1. Overcrowded parking lots.
2. Trouble negotiating the distance from parking lot to ticket counter.
3. Inflated parking charges.
4. Lack of smooth transportation between terminal and destination.
5. Little protection from theft or damage to parked cars.
6. Lack of coordination in airport planning.

Bus expressways that get commuters to work as much as thirty minutes earlier are being used in some cities to encourage leaving the car at home and to relieve traffic.

From the Dallas, Texas Hearing

"Public transportation in the inner city should be very cheap, perhaps free."

Terminal Design

The Consumers' key concerns in this area can be summarized as follows:

1. Passengers want to be relieved of their baggage before arriving at the terminal.
2. Baggage handling is unsatisfactory.
3. Baggage information is confusing.
4. Walking distance in terminal too far.
5. There are not enough readily understandable directional signs.

Travel Arrangements

Consumer major air travel complaints are that:

1. Air travel is too expensive.
2. Trips are broken up or delayed.
3. Reservations are not secure.
4. Service cancellations and schedule changes are too frequent.

Air Travel Safety

Consumers feel that efforts to improve air safety should include:

1. Up-to-date facilities.
2. Safety regulations to thwart hijackers.

RAILROADS

The most immediate concerns expressed by consumers with regard to rail passenger service are:

1. *Expanded service*: More trains, tracks, terminals, and better transportation to and from stations.
2. *Convenience*: Hi-speed trips, cleanliness, smoother ride, fewer delays or cancellations.
3. *Railroad Management*: Better publicity, better scheduling, financial stability, government operation, lower fares, wider ticket sales.

CONSUMER COMMENTS INVITED

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently published its intent to consolidate the current Traffic Safety Standards—administered independently by each of the 50 states—into a more efficient grouping of eight guideline standards.

The change, as proposed, would become effective in April 1973. Perhaps the change most directly affecting automobile owners and operators is a recommendation to each state that it enact a law making the use of seat belts mandatory for drivers and passengers of passenger vehicles. Other requirements would provide for arrest of traffic law violators without a warrant and require motor vehicle operators suspicioned of being under the influence of alcohol to submit to a preliminary breath test upon request of an officer.

Comments may be sent to Office of the Chief Counsel, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 7th and D Streets, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590 by November 1, 1972.

New Publications and Teaching Materials for Consumer Leaders

Bicycling for Recreation and Commuting was developed jointly by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of the Interior. This 26-page booklet describes the pleasure and benefits associated with bicycling for adults as well as children. The current bicycle boom has an estimated five million bicycles in use today. Described also are efforts of citizens to improve laws, bike paths, trails and safety. Leaders may get a *free single* copy of this publication by writing the Office of Consumer Affairs, U.S. Department of Transportation, Washington, D.C. 20590. For additional copies write the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price $.45.

Alcohol and Driving—A teaching kit for driver educators primarily, but any educator working in the traffic safety program might use this package. The nicely boxed kit contains a 79-page curriculum guide with learning objectives, activities and a selected bibliography as well as a film strip and sound tape. These materials were prepared by a panel of consultants brought together by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the Department of Transportation and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Association. The kit is available from the National Audiovisual Center, Washington. D.C. 20409. Price $10.00.

Part of the new look in Traffic Signs—when motorists learn to recognize the symbols the words will no longer be used. Non English speaking people will benefit most.

The New Look in Traffic Signs and Markings—A colorful 20-page leaflet developed by the Federal Highway Administration that describes widespread changes in highway and street signs and pavement markings due to come about during the next few years. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price $.35.

The Secretary of Transportation has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of this Department. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through August 30, 1975.

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